

October 3, 2022

**Subject: Please Strengthen Bill 25-22**

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you very much for considering Bill 25-22 to strengthen laws in order to protect our County's forests and enhance our tree canopy.

However, it is crucial that you all recognize that the bill needs to be strengthened in order to meet these objectives. It is not enough to be aspirational about protecting forests and tree canopy. We must be smart about how to achieve these goals. It's time to rethink current practices in a fundamental way.

So, to protect our forests and enhance our tree canopy, I strongly urge you to amend the bill based on the reasonable and comprehensive recommendations of the experts of the Montgomery County Forest Coalition. I believe the Forest Coalition has submitted its recommendations for the hearing and will be testifying.

I'd like to draw your attention to some key points:

- **Protecting existing forest ecosystems should be the top priority.** It is impossible to replace a mature tree - let alone a mature existing forest ecosystem. We must recognize that removal of existing forest ecosystems will mean considerable carbon release, diminished or eliminated future carbon capture, poorer air quality, higher temperatures, and reduced storm water management capacity both on the ground's surface and in the ground.
- **Strengthen replanting ratios to ensure no net loss.** Replanting ratios now in place and currently under consideration fall far short of delivering a no net loss outcome. Strengthen replanting requirements so that the replanting of forest ecosystems is required – not just the replanting of trees. County laws, regulations and practice must start to recognize in a significant way that what we're addressing here is an entire ecosystem, not just a few trees.
- **Strengthen Watershed Considerations.** The MCFC recommends strengthening ratios connected to afforestation and reforestation requirements outside the watershed where a forest or forest ecosystem were removed.
- **I personally urge the Council also to add language that would maximize the possibility that replanting is done in the watershed or subwatershed directly affected.** We have experienced time after time the negative effects of not doing local mitigation. I think it is fair to say that local livability and walkability have become worse under current laws and regulations. You can see this in increased effects on our urban heat island, air quality, stormwater and ground water management (how many more mysterious wet basements have you been hearing about?) and more noise.
- **I urge the Council to strengthen requirements for removing trees and increase tree protections in our urban areas.** There are many compelling reasons for doing this, but one critical reason is to reduce urban heat island effects. Recently, volunteers for the Friends of Sligo Creek (FOSC) undertook an urban pedestrian heat mapping exercise. Large differences were seen between tree shaded surfaces and the same surfaces in full sun on a warm summer's day. Some differences were as

large as 40 degrees. The surfaces receiving full sun were very hot, well over 100 degrees. Tree shade makes a very big difference in livability and walkability.

- **In my view, the County should require reasonable calculations of the net negative effects of not protecting forest ecosystems, not enhancing tree canopy and not protecting smaller numbers of trees.** Through these calculations, there will be better understanding for policymakers and residents plus increased transparency about the true costs of removing forest ecosystems and diminishing tree canopy.

I am writing in my personal capacity, but am an active member of the Friends of Sligo Creek (co-founder of the Water WatchDog Program and member, Water Quality Committee) and SOECA (head of the Environment Committee).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Anne Vorce

Silver Spring